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Housekeepers' Chats

Thursday, March 28, 1929.

Not for Publication

Subject: "Vegetables to Serve with Meats." From Bureau of Home Economics,
U. S. D. A.

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"Miss Menu Specialist," I said the other day, "if you were going to answer a question like this: 'What are the proper vegetables to serve with various meats?' what would you say?"

"If I were going to answer that question," said the Menu Specialist, "I would say a number of things, Aunt Sammy."

"Please," I said, "will you answer it? One of my listeners wants to know what vegetables should be served with various meats, and I told her I'd ask you. Are you going to say that one must always serve peas with lamb, and onions with beef-steak, and cabbage with corn beef?"

"Indeed I am not," said the Menu Specialist. "I'll be glad to answer your question, but not in the traditional manner. You know, Aunt Sammy, some people seem to think that if they have ham, they must have sweet potatoes. On some tables, lamb and peas are as inevitable as day and night. In other households, if the members of the family sniff fried onions when they open the front door, they are sure there's going to be beefsteak for dinner. Isn't that true?"

"Yes, but what's wrong with these combinations?"

"Nothing," said the Menu Specialist. "They are all good combinations -- once in a while. Nothing in the world the matter with them, except that they get over-worked in some households. Then meals become monotonous. There are no surprises. Every family needs pleasant surprises in its meals, now and then.

"Now, when I'm planning what vegetables to serve with certain meats, I go at it somewhat this way. Is it a delicate-flavored meat, or does it have a decided flavor of its own? Is it to be cooked so that there is rich, savory fat, like that on broiled chops, served with it? Or is it chiefly lean, like cold sliced roast meat? Or does it have a tasty gravy or sauce with it, like lamb stew or fricassee chicken, or pot roast or beef?

"Let's say we are having roast leg of lamb, or broiled lamb chops, for dinner. For one vegetable, I might choose a plain starchy kind -- crowned potatoes, baked potatoes, rice, or Jerusalem artichokes. For a second vegetable, I'd like something fresh, with a rather decided flavor, such as cabbage, Brussels sprouts, brocolli, kale, turnip greens, or spring onions. If tomatoes were plentiful, I'd have tomatoes sliced raw, or cooked

in some simple way so that their tartness would give a pleasant contrast to the flavor of the lamb. If fresh tomatoes were not in season, onions baked in tomato sauce might be the second vegetable. Lettuce salad, with a piquant dressing, might provide the leafy vegetable in this menu. Lamb always seems to call for a spicy pickle, or highly flavored jelly or conserve, also."

I didn't have the heart to tell the Menu Specialist she hadn't even mentioned green peas, with her lamb dinner. After all, perhaps it is possible to serve lamb without peas -- although I know some people who wouldn't think of it.

"Supposing," I suggested to the Menu Specialist, "supposing that you were basing a meal on cold sliced meat. What vegetables would you serve with that?"

"With cold sliced meat," said she, "fried or creamed potatoes, potato chips, or spaghetti and tomato, go especially well. To balance this, a leafy succulent cooked vegetable, or green salad, is needed. A fruit -- such as scalloped or glazed apples, or broiled peaches, will round the meal off.

"Stews and creamed meats seem to demand a starchy accompaniment in the form of toast, or dumplings, or biscuits. Or rice, hominy, or potatoes, cooked in the simplest possible way. Riced potatoes, with a savory beef stew, is an excellent start for a menu -- followed by string beans or spinach, for greenness. Slices of fried pineapple would add just the crusty texture and pleasant sweet-sour flavor and richness needed to contrast with the rest of the meal.

"If you are serving chicken, veal, or sweetbreads, you want to enjoy their delicate flavor; so it's best to accompany them with vegetables of delicate flavor. Fortunately, we have so many kinds of vegetables that we can keep the balance of green to starchy, sweet to sour, soft to crisp, with delicate flavors just as well as with strong flavors. Vegetables which go with these delicate flavored meats, to perfection, are fresh green peas, new string beans, new carrots, summer squash, cauliflower, mushrooms, cucumbers, lima beans, and corn on the cob.

"There, Aunt Sammy, have I answered your question? The old adage, 'variety is the spice of life,' can never be applied to anything more successfully than to meal planning."

I thanked the Menu Specialist for the information about "Vegetables to Serve with Meats." No wonder she can plan such appetizing meals for us -- she knows just how to go about it, doesn't she?

Before I left the Menu Specialist, she gave me an excellent suggestion for a luncheon, or supper. It's a rather unusual menu. I'll give it to you now, and talk about it afterwards: Cheese Dreams; Sardines served on lettuce, with a section of Lemon on the side; Pop-overs; Jellied Prunes and Cream; and Orange Cookies.

This combination of Cheese Dreams and Sardines on Lettuce, on one plate, is served occasionally for luncheon, at one of the hotels in Washington. It seems very popular.

Perhaps I'd better tell you how to make Cheese Dreams, before I continue with comments. Here's the recipe, for Cheese Dreams:

Slice bread thin. Remove the crusts. Without buttering the bread, make it into sandwiches with thin even slices of American cheese as the filling and a sprinkling of salt and a drop or two of tabasco for seasoning. Melt sufficient butter to cover the bottom of a smooth skillet. Brown the sandwiches delicately on both sides. Take care that the butter does not become so hot that it browns the sandwiches before the bread is heated through and the cheese melted. Serve the cheese dreams at once, with a salad of vegetables or sardines.

As I said before, Cheese Dreams and Sardines served on Lettuce are a popular combination. They would make a good and easy-to-prepare supper for a party at which men were present, or as the main part of a buffet luncheon. Everything but frying the Cheese Dreams could be done ahead of time.

You'll find recipes for Pop-overs and Orange Cookies in the Radio Cookbook.

To repeat the menu: Cheese Dreams; Sardines served on Lettuce, with a section of Lemon on the side; Pop-overs; Jellied Prunes and Cream; and Orange Cookies.

Tomorrow: "Three Easter Breakfast Menus."

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